



THE SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20201

SEP 14 2004

**TO:** Heads of Operating Divisions  
Heads of Staff Divisions

**FROM:** The Secretary

**SUBJECT:** Federal Public Health and Medical Ready Reserve - **ACTION**

Under the umbrella of the Initial National Response Plan (INRP), the Federal Response Plan establishes Emergency Support Functions (ESF) that are used to organize the government's preparedness and recovery efforts for a major disaster and designates a lead agency for each ESF. In the event of a natural disaster or terrorist attack, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is responsible for coordinating the Federal public health and medical response (ESF 8). While HHS relies heavily on the Commissioned Corps of the Public Health Service in executing our responsibilities under ESF 8, the realities of the post-9/11 world require that we plan for multiple and simultaneous events that could exhaust the capabilities of the Commissioned Corps. The Public Health Service and other components of HHS as well as other agencies of the Federal Government employ thousands of civilian physicians, nurses and allied healthcare professionals who could be an important complementary resource in the event of multiple and simultaneous events.

Americans have always stepped up to support the Nation in times of need. Now is such a time. There is a compelling need to develop a supplemental medical force that can be called upon to augment the Department's mass casualty care capability during a national emergency. Therefore, I am creating the Federal Public Health and Medical Ready Reserve. The Federal Public Health and Medical Ready Reserve will operate as follows:

- The Office of Public Health Emergency Preparedness (OPHEP) will maintain the roster for the Ready Reserve and will be responsible for effecting deployments. All deployments will be coordinated with Operation/Staff Division heads. OPHEP will be responsible for costs associated with the Ready Reserve. The relevant OPDIV or STAFFDIV will remain responsible for paying the Ready Reserve member's salary and benefits.
- OPHEP will be responsible for providing members of the Ready Reserve with such equipment, training, and material as may be necessary for deployment.
- OPHEP, in consultation with OPDIVs/STAFFDIVs, will be responsible for developing plans to ensure that deployments from the Ready Reserve do not compromise an OPDIV's or STAFFDIV's ability to perform its basic mission unless a National Emergency requires such a disruption.

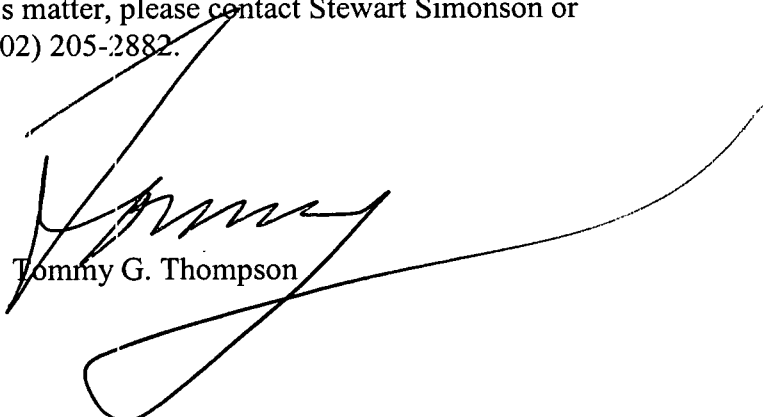
- Service in the Ready Reserve is purely voluntary. Members must be civilians and hold a valid professional license, certification or registration in one of the fifty states.

It is important that we establish the Federal Public Health and Medical Ready Reserve as quickly as possible so that we are prepared with a professional response capability in the event of major disaster or terrorist attack. I have directed OPHEP to convene a working group that will develop further details necessary to establish and operate the Ready Reserve. **Please identify an official within your division to serve as point of contact for this working group and provide the name of this official to Dr. Robert Claypool (Robert.Claypool@hhs.gov) by September 22, 2004.**

I ask that you take immediate steps to determine how many employees in your division would be interested in signing-up for membership in the Ready Reserve. This initial assessment will be critical to the development of a more coherent, deliberate plan. I understand that individuals cannot be asked to commit to such a mission without first having more specifics about the Ready Reserve. Once the plan has been formulated by the working group, I will write to employees who have expressed interest and convey relevant information so that they may make an informed choice.

I ask that you take an active role in helping me to implement the Ready Reserve. Please provide an electronic copy of this memorandum along with the attached form to all healthcare professionals (or, if not known, all employees) in your agency. **Employees interested in joining the Ready Reserve should complete the attached form and forward it to Ready.Reserve@hhs.gov no later than October 1, 2004.**

I know that you will support this important initiative to enhance our public health and medical response capability. If you have questions about this matter, please contact Stewart Simonson or Dr. Robert Claypool, who can both be reached at (202) 205-2882.



Tommy G. Thompson

Attachment